Answer the following questions as you read and re-read the play.

The purpose of these questions is to look at both the CONTENT of the play (what it says) as well as the CRAFT of the play (how Fugard says it). We want to explore the ways Fugard uses the tools and art of drama to create the powerful ideas and emotions conveyed in the play.

A simple question you might ask yourself is, “What makes this play work?” This will help us analyze the *dramatic logic* of the key moments, details and dramatic skills Fugard uses, as well as help us dig into the *subtext.*

***Dramatic logic***: The sense in which all elements of the drama—moving together at any given moment—contribute purposefully toward a focus, a specific goal that the playwright has in mind.

***Subtext***: The concept that much of what is really meant, thought, or felt by characters in a drama is submerged—by the playwright—just below the surface of the lines the characters actually speak.

Section #1 p. 1 [opening of play] to p. 15 [Sam: You tried to be better than me.]

1. What questions are posed by the title, including the use of quotation marks, nonstandard capitalization, etc.
2. What does the opening scene with Willie and Sam (both before any lines are spoken and in their first interaction) set up? In other words, what is established about their characters before Hally enters? Consider, here, especially, props and the staging of characters (their initial ‘attitudes’ and placements).
3. What does the focus on ballroom dancing reveal in this first part of the play? What does the focus on ballroom dancing prepare us for later? Comment on the contrast [juxtaposition] of ballroom dancing as Sam characterizes it with the reality of working with partners as Willie describes. Why does Fugard include this contrast? What does it do for the audience?
4. When Hally enters, we might expect a tidy, polished student, but his clothing is described as untidy and unkempt. Why does Fugard make a point of including Halley’s appearance in the stage directions? What (in other words) is the dramatic logic of his costuming?
5. Explore how the dialogue involving Hally’s father (p. 6-8) actually tells much of the story of Hally’s family history. How does Fugard say a lot by saying very little? (Look for subtext!)
6. What use does Fugard make of the comparisons of whippings on p. 9?
7. What is the dramatic logic behind the extensive dialogue concerning “men of great magnitude”? (p. 9-15)

Section #2: p. 16 [Hally: The old Jubilee Boarding house…] to p. 24 [Hally: There’s more to life than trotting around a dance floor…]

1. How does Fugard use the sharing of memories about the Jubilee Boarding House? [Focus on p. 16-17, and don’t use the kite story to answer this one]. Fugard has his characters construct a kind of “play within a play” (notice Hally’s comment about “so much for stage directions” (p. 16)). Why does Fugard use these kinds of terms?
2. What’s the dramatic logic behind the kite story? Hally sees himself and Sam as characters in a short story—and then adds Willie. Why does Fugard have Hally reconstruct this memory in terms of a story?
3. How does the telephone work as a prop here (p. 20-21)? What’s the effect of keeping Hally’s mother offstage, even though she’s clearly an important presence of some sort?
4. As Hally supposedly begins his homework, Sam and Willie return to the issue of Willie’s dancing. How does Fugard use this brief section (p. 22-24)? What does this reveal about the relationship between Willie and Sam? What does it reveal about Sam’s character?
5. Analyze the subtext of Hally’s comment, “How the hell am I supposed to concentrate with the two of you behaving like bloody children?” (p. 24). Stretch this as far as you can, into as many thematic implications as possible.

Section #3: p. 24 [Sam: It’s a harmless pleasure, Hally…] to p. 33 [Hally: It’s going to stop right now…]

1. What is Hally’s definition of art? To what does this definition appeal? What is Sam’s definition of art? How does Fugard use this contrast?
2. Analyze the subtext of Sam’s comment that Hally’s “imagination hasn’t helped [him] at all” (p. 24). Why does Sam consider Hally’s perspective deficient? How is tis comment about more than just Hally’s patronizing attitude toward dancing? Note that later on, Hally says, “We’ll just have to use our imaginations and hope for the best” (p. 29). Explore the implications of this statement. Does Hally know what he’s saying?
3. What’s the significance of Hally’s decision to use the ballroom dancing competition as the subject for his essay? In what sorts of terms does he see his composition? (Think about the line: “but to build the tension and suspense I need facts” (p 27). How do Sam and Willie help him see the drama and “theatricality” of the event as well (p. 26). Stop your discussion at “Must I start…” on p. 29.
4. Examine Sam’s comments about the connection between dancing and life (p. 29-30). How does Fugard use this complicated metaphor? To what else does it connect in the play?
5. Compare Hally’s conversation on the phone with his mother to his dialogue with Sam and Willie. how does Fugard use this contrast?
6. How does Hally’s reaction to his mother’s news (p. 31-33) illustrate the degree to which Hally’s been able to apply the lessons presented to him by Sam? How does Fugard use dramatic irony in this scene?

Section #4: p. 33 [Hally: You’re only a servant in here…] to p. 37 [end of play (notice the typo…last speech is Willie’s, not Sam’s!)]

1. Why does Hally suddenly demand to be called “Master Harold”? Why does Sam say, “If you make me say it once, I’ll never call you anything else” (p. 34)? What is at stake here?
2. Why does Hally repeat the racist joke (p. 34-35)? How do you—as reader/audience—react to Sam’s response?
3. Sam’s two longest, most direct speeches occur toward the very end of the play (p. 36). How and why does Fugard both continue to use an earlier story and its larger metaphor (the kite) and drop all attempt to use subtext in favour of explicit comment?
4. Discuss the significance of the play’s final moment between Sam and Willie after Hally’s exit (p. 37). Why does Fugard have the play return to ballroom dancing? Why does Fugard have Willie reconsider his attitude toward Hilda?
5. Consider the song on p. 37. What are its dramatic and thematic functions? (Hint: Remember the play’s opening.) Why does the play end this way?

Big Questions  
(These questions would be great ones for a unit test…hint, hint.)

1. To what degree are racial attitudes inherited? To what degree are they a choice? What evidence is there in “Master Harold”…and the boys to support your position?
2. To what degree does art/aesthetics/imagination have the power to transform an individual and society as a whole? How does “Master Harold”…and the boys explore this idea?
3. As the action of a play unfolds, dramatic tensions, thematic ideas and strong emotions are often produced by the playwright’s use of concealment and revelation. Discuss and interpret *“Master Harold”…and the boys* in light of this statement.

Thematic topics to look for:

These are not *themes* (see your literary terms for a definition of theme), but are topics that the play comments on (the topics might be transformed into theme statements, with a little thought).

* Racism (causes, effects, how to get past it, etc.)
* Friendship and relationships
* The role of art (ballroom dancing, stories, plays, crafts (the making of a kite))
* Dreams and hopes (“world without collisions”)
* Guilt and shame, and how they might be transformed into art or change
* Fathers and sons (Sam and Hally; Hally’s crippled father and Hally)
* Integrity and greatness of character (men of magnitude)
* Making the passage into authentic adulthood/maturity